

PERMISSION TO REDUCE TIME  
FOR ELECTRONIC VOTING DURING  
FURTHER CONSIDERATION  
OF H.R. 2419

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that, during further consideration of H.R. 2419 pursuant to House Resolution 574, the Chair may reduce to 2 minutes the minimum time for electronic voting under clause 6 of rule XVIII and clauses 8 and 9 of rule XX.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

FARM, NUTRITION, AND  
BIOENERGY ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 574 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 2419.

□ 1149

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2419) to provide for the continuation of agricultural programs through fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes, with Mr. SCHIFF (Acting Chairman) in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, amendments en bloc by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) had been disposed of.

AMENDMENT NO. 21 OFFERED BY MR. UDALL OF  
COLORADO

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 21 printed in part B of House Report 110-261.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 21 offered by Mr. UDALL of Colorado:

In section 1102(b)(6), strike "\$0.0667" and insert "\$0.06".

In section 2104 strike subsection (b) and insert the following new subsection:

(b) ENROLLMENT OF ACREAGE.—Subsection (b)(1) of section 1238N of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3838n(1)) is amended by striking "2,000,000 acres" and inserting "2,224,000 acres".

In section 2401, insert after subsection (c) the following new subsection (and redesignate subsequent subsections accordingly):

(d) GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM.—Section 1241(a) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3841(a)) is amended by striking paragraph (5) and inserting the following new paragraph:

"(5) For each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012, the grassland reserve program under subchapter C of chapter 2."

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 574, the gentleman

from Colorado (Mr. UDALL) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Chairman, let me start by thanking Chairman PETERSON and Ranking Member GOODLATTE for their hard work on this important piece of legislation. I will be very proud to support the bill on final passage.

While clearly this reform legislation, and I want to underline this is reform legislation, is a positive step forward in ag policy, I believe my amendment improves the bill. It is a win-win for ranchers and the environment.

Mr. Chairman, the amendment is modest and very simple. It would make a small reduction in the direct payment rate for cotton, just two-thirds of a cent. That savings, which would be \$127 million, would be used to fund additional enrollment in the Grassland Reserve Program. The Grassland Reserve Program is a jointly administered program by the National Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency. It uses long-term rental agreements and easements to help landowners and producers restore and protect grasslands while maintaining them in a condition suitable for grazing.

This investment of Federal dollars also helps to leverage State and local monies to expand these preservation areas. The reserves that I am speaking of provide habitat for diverse wildlife, including prairie chickens, grassland birds, game species, and prairie plants. Unfortunately, it was underfunded in the previous farm bill. There remains, therefore, a significant backlog for those wanting to access the program.

According to data from the United States Department of Agriculture, the 2006 backlog of unfunded applications totaled more than \$1.1 billion, or 11 million acres, and interest continues to grow.

Now, the Agriculture Committee has made great strides to enhance this grasslands program, but their hard work will be for naught unless there is additional funding to ease the backlog of program applicants. We really cannot wait to make this investment because much of America's grassland continues to be converted to row crops, and other grasslands throughout the west are being developed and subdivided.

According to CRS, between 1982 and 2003, we have lost more than 10 percent of our pastureland, which is over 10 million acres.

The amendment would reduce total direct payments in the bill by less than one-tenth of 1 percent. Direct payments are not the only support for cotton producers in the bill. As the committee report notes, there are important changes in the loan program to make American cotton more competitive and move stocks out of storage. The bill also allows the Department of

Agriculture to continue to pay for upland cotton storage until 2012.

So the amendment doesn't cause real great hardship for cotton producers, but it would help many of our ranchers. I urge the House to support the amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Chairman, I have to oppose the gentleman's amendment. Not that I don't support the Grassland Reserve Program, but the provisions of the commodity title were worked out by the committee very carefully in an effort to balance all of the various commodities' needs in that process. We don't think that it is fair to single out one commodity for changes even though it is for a worthwhile purpose. Cotton has already seen major changes with the bill's termination of the storage payments and also major reforms in payment limitations.

Additionally, the bill provides 1,340,000 acres to be enrolled in GRP, a substantial increase. I know that the gentleman from Colorado has been a leader in the coalition that has been advocating this program, and I appreciate his efforts and leadership in this area. Unfortunately, targeting any single commodity, in this case, cotton, for further reductions in their safety net is unwarranted and unfair. Therefore, I urge my colleagues to oppose the amendment.

I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. NEUGEBAUER).

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Chairman, I also rise in strong opposition to the Udall amendment. This amendment singles out one commodity for reduction in order to increase an unrelated program.

This bill already increases funding to enroll nearly 1 million new acres in the Grassland Reserve Program. That is a significant amount of land.

Some might think this is a small change in direct payment. It doesn't seem like much; however, this bill does not make changes in any of the current direct payments, and this would single out only one commodity, that being cotton, for reduction in direct payments.

The House Agriculture Committee has already made significant changes to cotton. The bill reduces cotton target prices and eliminates cotton loan storage credits. In addition, payment limit changes are more likely to affect cotton farmers than any other commodity.

If you want to increase the grasslands program, the offsets should not come from one commodity that is already taking a fairly major change in this bill. Let's treat all commodities the same and oppose the Udall amendment.